

March 1, 2021

To the Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Rachael Gabriel, I am an associate professor literacy education at the University of Connecticut, and I served on the task force to analyze the implementation of laws governing dyslexia instruction and training as the governor's appointee. My area of research is the intersection of policy and literacy instruction, specifically how state laws set and limit opportunities to develop literacy.

The findings of this report suggest there may be significant unintended consequences related to recent dyslexia legislation, and that these unintended consequences disproportionately impact under-resourced districts and their students. An empirical evaluation of the impact on district finances, teacher practice and student outcomes are required to ensure that the law has had its intended impact.

Though all districts have been required to contract with one of three vendors for universal screening tools, our task force found that *none* of these products offers a comprehensive approach to dyslexia screening.

Though all teacher preparation programs have been required to add hours focused on dyslexia, there is no evidence that these hours, or the state-created module have the desired impact on teacher knowledge, skills or beliefs about dyslexia.

Likewise, though all districts are required to provide teacher professional development related to dyslexia, there is no evidence of the implementation of impact of this PD. Therefore, teacher preparation programs and districts have made significant investments of multiple resources without clear evidence that these investments serve the best interests of students with dyslexia or their peers. This is especially troubling when considering districts whose resources are already stretched thin and whose achievement and equity require the most rigorous support.

I hope you will consider endorsing the findings of the committee and ensure that existing and future legislation related to reading and dyslexia are tied to a rigorous evaluation to ensure their intentions are realized. Specifically,

1. Establish a dyslexia in-service training program advisory council for the purpose of evaluating the quality of the structured literacy training provided in such programs, and
2. Establish a data center to guide the department and local and regional boards of education in the use and effectiveness of reading assessments.
3. Request proposals for a comprehensive impact study of dyslexia-related legislation

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachael Gabriel', with a stylized, cursive script.

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